THE GARMENT OF GOD

BY

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THERE is no Easter, Lord, for any soul
Until it dawn for ev'ry son of man.
Within the wood springeth a fierce life
For each young babe of our great Mother's love.
Wherefore the Sun danceth on Easter day,
And from the larches rings the cuckoo's shout.
That little stream a-glitter in the field
Singeth a song of gladness for the hour,
Wherein the Lord of Life shall rise indeed,
In all His children of a passing Day.
Christ is not risen while the stain of sin
Darkens His likeness in one struggling soul,
He waiteth in a sure and certain hope
Within the grave of the sad hearts of men.
Yet in the changeless mirror of His heart
A silver peace abideth, and He waits,

Mother and Father of the veilëd souls,
To raise them from the darkness of the cave,
Unto the Light which shineth in the dark,
Until the dark shall know it and shall sing
A hymn of glory to the Sacred Form ;
Praising the Veilëd Mother who reveals
The Secret of Her heart.
Secret of Silence ! Secret of the Life
Of that Unchangeable and Mighty name,
Which none may speak and live, as men know life.
Give us, O Lord, that speech !

THE GARMENT OF GOD.

"AWAY WITH OTHER WORDS; HE IS THE BRIDGE TO THE IMMORTAL."

MUNDAKOPANISHAD.

"NOT DISCERNING THE LORD'S BODY."

I. Corinthians, XI., 27.

Lo! It was Advent in a human soul!
A calling voice that shook it into throes
Of bitter agony and burning doubt,
Was crying in the wilderness he knew
As his own mind and heart, "Prepare the way!
Make clean the cave wherein the Lord shall lie
In helpless babehood." And a mocking voice
Whisper'd in scorn: "Behold! God's temple, thou;
O holy shrine! wherein a lawless crew
Of thieves and harlots hold their filthy sway!
The evil that thou hatest, that thou dost;
Thy virtues cause thy brethren to offend;
Eat then and drink; tomorrow death is thine!
And God's good temple shall be given o'er
To the cold canker of that narrow house
Where worms shall revel silently; and thou!

Where wilt thou find a refuge in that hour ?
Or wilt thou be at all ? what the Lord gave,
He shall reclaim ; and so thy life shall fade
In utter nothingness—a blown out flame ! "
Wherefore, thus scourg'd and tortur'd, the man rose,
And pass'd from out the city to the woods,
Wherein the goddess of the vernal year
Held Easter revel 'neath an April sun ;
He was a city dweller, held therein,
By pity for the sinstain'd and the weak,
Who cried for help, tho' voiceless ; and the man
Tended them Christ like ; listen'd to their woes ;
Rebuk'd their vices ; sooth'd their dying hours.
But now this barrenness of mind and heart
Drove him into the woods to dwell alone
A little space ; and strongly cry to God
For light and wisdom. In a narrow glade,
Fleck'd by the shadows of the flying clouds,
He found a tiny hut ; and saw therein
A man with eyes like crystal lakes of light ;
Unruffled, even by a passing gust
Of restlessness or wrath.
A mighty patience, and a constant love,
Dwelt in those eyes ; which lighten'd with great joy,
When he beheld the man whose Advent hour

Dawning, had sent him from the hearths of men,
To wander in the wilderness alone.
It was the joy of one who sees a friend
From whom he has been parted very long,
Nor ever has forgotten. In the hut
Was but an earthen jar, a heap of hay,
Which with the perfume of June meadows fill'd
The tiny cot ; and on the wall there hung
The picture of a little brown rob'd man
Whose image glow'd with light, and lit the place
With most angelic glory ; now the man,
Stood silent ; striving with a memory
Which mock'd and fled from him.
He knew this stranger of the forest hut ;
He knew the pictur'd face upon the wall,
Lit with God's Light and steadfast with His Peace.
Then, as he stood in silence, the recluse,
Bent on him tenderly his seer's eyes,
And bade him enter ; saying : " Peace to thee !
Peace of Our Father and our Mother too,
Which art in Heaven ; for the Twain are One ;
She is the Pow'r of God that fashions Worlds ;
And He the still small Voice within the heart,
Lord of that Sacred Body which is Her's,
Mother of worlds ! Mother of Gods and men ! "

" Blessëd must thou be " replied the other,
" For upon thy face,
I see the peace which Christ alone doth give ;
Let me abide with thee a space, O friend !
Thy face I know not ; yet meseems I know
The soul that shines thro' those far seeing eyes.
Tell me moreover whose this pictur'd face,
And whence thou hadst it ? " " By this hand of mine "
Answered the dweller in the forest hut,
" The face was limm'd ; and drawn from memory,
Of One I saw in days which now abide
In the great Mother's garner house of years.
And when I gaz'd upon that Sacred Face,
In the same hour I first look'd on thine own.
Hast thou forgotten the great temple steps,
And he, the shivering captive from the mines,
Waiting thy word to doom him to the lash ? "
The list'ner answer'd : " Yea ! a memory,
As from a dream world, of a land of old ;
Where thou and I were other, yet ourselves.
And in those days I seem'd the mightier man,
And thou the lesser ; but the last is first,
The first the weaker and the lowlier,
Thus said the Christ ; and thus with thee and me ;
For in thine eyes I see the peace of God ;

And in my heart I know a stormy sea
Of fierce turmoil and bewilder'd pain."
Then said the dweller in the forest hut :
" Listen ! while I give back to thee the past ;
There was a Mighty One Who came from God
Bearing a message from His Throne of Light.
He struck upon the Harp of human life
A note of power ; and some men answer'd it.
Some answer'd it with melody ; and some
With discord ; for He came—that mighty One—
To send on earth a sword of subtle fire ;
A bitter teacher of the striving mind,
Built up with throes, and full of haunting ghosts
Of thoughts out-worn ; strong prisons of the soul.
Now those who answer'd Him with melody,
Fashioned a song when He had pass'd away
From their dim eager eyes ; and thus it rang :
"The Lord is One, and dwelleth in the souls
Of all men. We who toil, are of one blood ;
He is alike in garments fair and foul ;
All paths lead unto Him, and all is well ;
Let sin irk no man's soul ; it is the way
That leadeth unto Him, Who suffers it."
Now many called them mad, and gone astray
In ways of dream ; but one who heard their song,

(Most fair of face, and lovëd by the King)
Prevail'd on him to let them raise a Shrine
Within the city limits ; and to build
A place of peace, where they might dwell apart ;
Seekers of Love, and Unity, and Truth.
That land—dost thou remember ?—knew not peace ;
It was a place of strife, and warring souls ;
Of subtle minds, of strong and skilful hands ;
And those who were the strongest and most wise,
Answer'd with discord to the Teacher's chord,
Struck on life's harp. They answered with swift jeers,
The melody the others gladly sang.
The perfect answer to the Wise One's call,
Was for another age, another clime ;
And this the Teacher knew, and was content ;
Knowing that from a jarring instrument
A perfect harmony may not be drawn.
But those who answer'd Him with melody,
Like those whose answer was with jangl'd notes,
Desir'd to pluck from thistles and from thorns,
The luscious vintage of the fig and vine.
And when the God-created thistle bore
After its' kind, then neither were content.
But these were wrath, and those were sorrowful
Because they lov'd not the harsh thistle's fruit,

That veil'd the Life of God.
Now in those days thou wast a mighty man ;
Thou wroughtest in the battles of the King,
Great feats of knighthood, and of fighter's skill."
" Yea " cried the other " I remember well !
O holy one, thou giv'st me back the past.
I held the message of that Mighty Lord,
In harsh and bitter scorn ; chiefly because,
I noted those who answer'd it with strains
Of tender harmony ; because I saw
They failëd in their dealings with mankind.
I rul'd the city with a hand of iron ;
I rul'd the mines where in the darkness lay
The criminal, the outlaw, and the slave ;
And thus I said : " It may be that your God
Dwelleth in all ; but He is sore disguis'd.
I deal with the disguise wherein His power
Lies hidden ; for I deal,
With many strange and diverse moods of men,
On whom full oft your precepts have no pow'r ;
Ye shudder at the foulness that ye mark ;
For me, what though I hold not as ye hold,
That God Himself dwelleth in foul and fair,
I do not shudder. I shall not persuade,
Nor preach to sinners ; no ! nor weep for them.

Nor shall I tell them all shall yet be well,
And they shall be one day noble as I.
Thus do ye, holy ones ! But I will make
Them fear me thro' the dread of death and hell,
Fear of the mines, and terror of the lash
To which my word may doom them ; they shall fear,
And I will rule ; and all ye shall have peace."
Smiling, the other answer'd : " Lo ! indeed
I gave thee back the past. But tell me this :
What of the outlaw'd captive from the mines,
Dost thou remember him ? He that did walk
In ways of mire and darkness, and forgot
The God from Whom he came ; for he had known
An unlov'd childhood ; and he dwelt with those
Who were most righteous ; yet their righteousness
Caus'd them to grieve for his great sinfulness ;
Or else his virtues being not as their's,
Were sin to them.
Wherefore they us'd him sternly ; treated him
With harshness, till he fear'd them mightily ;
And yet he fear'd them less than his own soul,
Whereat he marvell'd daily more and more.
At last he fled from home, and join'd himself
With outlaw'd men ; and falling captive soon,
Unto the law-givers ; was sent to dwell

A pris'ner in the mines ; and there abode
Chok'd with foul air, and frozen by the cold ;
Starvëd with hunger, sicken'd with such food,
Loathsome and coarse, as was the daily dole ;
Rent by the lash of a harsh taskmaster ;
And hourly curs'd by those who drove him on
To his unceasing toil.
From human love, and from the Love of God,
He was an outcast without hope or help.
Or thus it seem'd unto his broken heart.
One day a starving comrade of the mines,
A man who suffer'd for his conscience sake,
Told him the Teacher's message ; and how some,
Answering with melody, had made a shrine
Of peace and brotherhood ; whereto they drew
All men who listed, in a common bond,
Of the great Life of God that puls'd alike,
Within the hearts of sinners and of saints.
Now one moon afterwards the captive fled,
With a faint hope flutt'ring within his soul.
The hunters at his heels, he gain'd the shrine ;
And there the dwellers claimëd as their due,
The right to give him shelter. Tell me, friend,
Dost thou remember ? " And the other said :
" Surely I do so. It was unto me

They came ; urging their right, and the king's
pledge.
Whereto I answer'd : "Take, and keep the man."
In scorn I added : "When ye fear the knave,
Come unto me, that I may deal with him,
And succour all the pious saints of God
Within your borders." Now the man abode
With them three months, and did after his kind.
And many treated him right brotherly,
With pious condescension, and a love
Toilsome, and fashion'd fair for holy-days.
And some exhorted him ; assail'd his ears,
Made dull by loneliness and misery,
With strange philosophies ; and lofty codes,
Of high moralities purer than snow ;
They told him of the God within his heart ;
Told him—whose aching limbs and 'wilder'd head,
Were all he knew of body or of soul.
Some wept before him many scalding tears,
Because he could not see the good they sought ;
To which men toil unwitting. And at last,
They came to me ; and said he was in ward,
Within their temple court.
Their holy town was sore befoul'd by him ;
They prayëd me, to take him from their midst

And show him mercy ; but in any case
Remove him from them ; for they could not bear
Ill thoughts or foulness ; so long had their souls
Dwelt upon God, that man they scarce could bear.
For all things base and lowly hurt them sore,
So sensitive were they, and finely wrought ;
And they were delicately full of fear,
When foulness smote and jarr'd their perfect peace.
Now much was said in their philosophy
Of universal Nature's weft and warp ;
Fashion'd of all things whether fair or foul,
And duly order'd in the Thought of God.
" To-morrow I will take the man," I said,
" Since ye be tender souls, he shall not die ;
But I will scourge him till he fears to fly
From bitterest toil ; lest he should be reta'en,
And fall into my hands. And well ye know,
Ye may not interfere with the just Law ;
Nor could I scourge the man unless it were
Within his fate." " Yea ! it is true," said they,
Taking great comfort ; and I laugh'd in scorn.
I came upon the morrow ; and I saw
The temple doors flung wide. Within the Shrine,
A little lamp was shining ; where abode
God's Presence visible in sacred form ;

The holy symbol of His Flesh and Blood.
And all the people bow'd them to the shrine,
And I bow'd likewise. Then I turned and saw,
Bound to a pillar in that Court of Love,
The man who was my helpless prisoner.
Shadow-wise he stood !
A grey wan shadow of once-mortal fear ;
Upon his face the lights,
From the great altar flickered elfishly ;
He was a man half dead ; moving in trance
Through a grey world ; a world that once he fear'd;
His life was but a pow'r of being wak'd
Into a sudden dread of pain and shame.
I had the skill to know,
A great man when I stood before his face ;
I was not small of mould, whate'er my sins ;
And oft-time I could spy,
A warp of greatness in the gray coarse weft,
Of some small human soul.
I saw this man, now helpless in my hands,
Was larglier builded than the holy souls
Who yielded him to me with shudderings.
Behind his shadow-presence there was one
Greater for good or ill than any there.
Wherefore I deem'd he must be straitly held

In bitter bondage ; being dangerous.
O friend ! There is a pow'r which lives in men ;
In all, for aught I know, which is a cure,
For the foul curse of sin ;
Healing for sorrows, and a balm for ills
Of body, soul, and mind.
He, in the picture there,
Wield'd that pow'r as a king holds and rules,
By right of kingship, all within his realm.
I never saw a man, before that day ;
Nor have I seen another since that hour ;
The men with whom we daily live and move
Are in the fashioning ; He was a man,
As man lives in God's Thought.
Then was the hour I saw Him, whose still face
Liv'd in my memory like a haunting dream,
Till now ; when thou, O holy one of God,
For so I deem thee, gave me back the past.
He came from the High Altar ; in his eyes
Infinite patience, and still wisdom lived ;
Clad in beggar's weeds, He mov'd a king ;
Beside him the high priest, in sacred robes,
Rejoicing that a saint should tread their shrine,
And bless the people ; who bow'd down to him ;
He, as they bow'd, did greet them lowly wise,

With tender courtesy and humbleness.
He greeted me full gently ; then he turn'd,
And bow'd him meekly to the prisoner,
Bound to the pillar till I dragg'd him thence,
To doom him to the lash.
Then through the court a murmur slowly swell'd,
" Bëhold ! the saintly one, the man of God !
Who worships in the foulest the One Life.
He sees the Lord, hidden in any guise."
The holy man made answer unto them :
" I worship here the Body of the Lord
Whom ye discern not.
Unto His Sacred Form I bow myself ;
Hear ye, my children ! ye perceive in man
The Lord of all things both of heav'n and earth ;
Now wherefore then do ye revile His Form ;
When ye do arrogantly throw an alms,
With mind unreverent and prideful mien,
Ye offer insult to the Sacred Form ;
The Body of the Lord ye do not see.
Ye see Him not, my brothers, while ye turn,
Shuddering, from His Body and His Blood ;
Ye see Him not, when ye do turn aside
With scorn and fear ; lest by His garments' hem,
Ye should be brush'd unwitting ; and so soil'd

And lessen'd in your purity and grace.
For I, who have not known God nor myself,
As that which changes not ; do worship Him
As Change which showeth that the Changeless is ;
Therefore I worship the Lord's Body here."
And speaking thus he bow'd himself ; and kiss'd
The outlaw's feet ; and as he bow'd, he cried :
" O Lord, my God and King ! where is there aught
That is not Thee, of body or of soul.
Lord ! shall we scorn Thee and blaspheme Thy Name,
Because Thou veilest from our foolish eyes,
Thy glory ; Master ! these our eyes are dim,
Glamour'd by idle choice of this or that,
Which is fair seeming to our blinded sight."
E'en as he spoke we saw the sinner's form,
Struck as by fire ; he stood before us there,
A living flame, the garment of the Lord !
Then at the pillar's foot the outlaw'd man
Crouchëd before us, daz'd with pain and fear.
Yet never in my sight the man could seem,
As first I saw him ; for the sacred eyes
Of that great man of men dwelt on his face,
In rev'rent pity ; and his reverence
And holy worship causëd me to see,

A hidden glory round the trembling form.
The man of God pass'd down the temple steps ;
And as he went his eyes did rest on me,
And his lips smil'd. Thus I was left alone
To claim my captive. With a gentle hand
I cut the ropes that bound him, and I spoke :
" To-day " I said " God, by His messenger,
Hath talk'd with us. Return with me, I pray ;
And fear me not ; for no man in the world,
Unless he were indeed the Christ of God,
Would dwell in hell if he could fly therefrom ;
I will not punish you because you fled."
He rais'd his eyes to mine, 'wilder'd with fear,
And said, with trembling lips : " Be merciful,
And kill me." " Nay," I said, "That will I not ;
For you have work to do, in this good world."
He sigh'd : " I should be glad,
Because you do not scourge me. That will come,
Soon, at the mines." " Nay, not for you," I said,
" You shall be treated better than the rest."
" I will not have it so " he answer'd low,
" For in the mines are many innocent."
" And you," said I " Are you not innocent ? "
He veil'd his face : " You know it is not so."
" There may be some," I said,

"Are punished for their virtues," "You are wrong,"
He cried; and then he trembled. "Fear me not,"
Said I; "Why am I wrong?"
"Because" he answer'd "There's a narrow line
Twixt sin and virtue; when their virtues stray,
A-down the path of sin, they suffer for 't."
"Is 't thus with thee?" I ask'd. "No" he replied;
"I know my sins for sins; but these men hold,
Their sins for virtues; and are punish'd oft,
In that belief; they would not sin, these folk;
Knowing their sins for sins."
"And how with thee?" ask'd I.
"For me" he said; his mouth a-tremble,
And a bitter ring in his sad voice,
"I am not as these men;
I sin most willingly; the lash alone,
And fear of death and hell, and hunger's pinch,
Make me do rightly, sir, at any time."
"That's false" said I. He did not answer me,
But turn'd his face aside. At last he said:
"For that I thank you more, a thousand times,
Than for the ruth that sav'd me from the scourge."
"Return with me" cried I "Within the mines,
Let thou and I, searching with patient eyes,
Discern His Body. Thou, who knowest pain,

The Lord's great Teacher ; I, who e'en as thou,
Know much of sin, of failure, and of shame."
I held my hand forth ; for a moment's space
He laid his own therein ; it trembled there ;
He snatch'd it thence, and laid it o'er his eyes.
Then we return'd together ; in the mines
We toil'd as servants of the Man of God
Whose face we never saw. At last the man—
My fellow toiler,—died of fever there,
His hand in mine ; and left me sorrowful.
But now, most Holy One, for so thou art ;
Where wert thou on that wondrous day of days,
When that great Son of God kissed the feet
Of him, the outlaw'ed sinner whom I loved ?
Wert thou the high priest in his sacred robes ?
Or some pure worshipper within the shrine ? "
He of the hut,
Made answer with a smile of tenderness :
" I was the outlaw'd sinner at whose feet
That son of God did bow ; yea ! I was he
Whom thy great mercy and thy tenderness,
Pluck'd from the mire ; within whose darken'd soul,
Thy rev'rent love, thy loyal friendship, lit
The flame that smoulder'd as a little spark.
O brother, could I pay my debt to thee,

In petty coin of a service done
To thine own person ; it were all too poor !
O friend—beloved—for thy mighty love,
Was no requital save a willing gift,
Of soul and body to the Living Lord
Revealed in His children. Toiling thus,
My advent came and passed ; within my soul
There dawn'd a Christmas morn ; which dawns for thee.
O brother, thou and I shall surely see
Our Easter morning ; in a certain hope
Of the last Easter, when the Risen Lord
Bursting the bonds of Death and the Grave,
Shall rise in all His children ; and the hymn
Of a triumphant universe shall ring,
With shouts and laughter of the Sons of God,
Unto the distant stars."